

A Hair's Breath

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Summary: An offhanded comment by Edie makes Jamie realize that he needs to make a move before things change and he loses his chance. Special thanks to my beta lawslave who tried to convince me to spell Edie with 2 ds.

A Hair's Breath

Jamie stood at the bar taking in all the action around him. It was a few minutes after midnight but the place had a decent crowd, cops, firefighters and nurses mostly but a few neighborhood types were mixed in. He'd stopped by the local watering hole for a drink after his shift had ended at 11:00 p.m. Because it was a slow night he actually got out close to on time and had made it over here after a quick shower to rinse off the day's grime. Whoever said crime fighting was dirty business knew what they were talking about.

The past few weeks had been rough. With Danny's encouragement, Jamie had reluctantly agreed to become Marcus's training officer but the rookie's gung-ho attitude still made him reckless on the street. Jamie wasn't sure he was cut out to teach another person to think first when that person seemed hell bent on acting without a thought to the consequences. So far nothing had been as bad as that attempted bank robbery and Marcus seemed more willing to hang back once the guns came out, but that wasn't always the hallmark of a good cop either. When things got rough, hesitation could get somebody killed. Jamie knew he had to help the rookie develop better decision making skills and improved situational assessments. Unfortunately, he also knew that experience was the best teacher but experience came from making bad decisions.

Looking around, Jamie spotted Edie playing pool against one of the other rookies who had transferred in with Marcus from the academy. Jamie couldn't remember the guy's name "Gomez, Gonzales, something like that. No matter his name, by the time this game was over, the guy's wallet was going to be a few dollars lighter. Edie was quite

the pool shark. Bent over the pool table with her blonde tresses hanging down onto the green felt, she didn't look like a tough as nails New York City cop. The way her tight jeans clung to the curves of her ass didn't help. As she bent over to take her shot, she noticed Jamie and nodded in greeting. He returned the head gesture and tried not to stare straight down the cleavage on ample display from this angle. After she sunk her ball, Edie walked around the table, more like strutted, because she was so confident in her pool prowess not to mention all the male attention she was commanding. With her back to Jamie, Edie bent over to line up her next shot. If there was a bit of an extra shimmy as she settled in and pulled back on the cue stick, well a girl couldn't be blamed for putting it out there. Taking a sip of his beer, Jamie forced himself to look away. He couldn't afford to get caught checking her out although he knew his weren't the only eyes trained on her shapely rear.

At that point, Reynolds proved a sufficient distraction. "Mike and I got an extra ticket to Opening Day in the Bronx. You in?" When Jamie didn't immediately reply, Reynolds tried again. "Earth to Reagan."

"Huh, what?" Jamie sputtered.

"That is a nice view," Reynolds offered, referring to Janko's antics.

Jamie scowled at the other man. It always irked him when men objectified women, even more so when it was a woman he cared about.

Reynolds held up a hand in mock surrender. "Whoa. Not poaching here. Everybody knows Janko is yours."

Jamie started to see red and clenched and unclenched his hand at his side. "Officer Janko is not 'mine'. There is nothing going on between me and her. She is free to do whatever she likes."

Imitating her body language Reynolds pointed out, "That little wiggle move wasn't for the rest of us, Reagan. I don't know what's holding you back. Half the guys in this place would sell their left nut for a shot at that,"

"Just shut up, Reynolds," Jamie admonished. He never understood why everybody always assumed that he and his partner had something going on. He worked so hard to maintain the professional boundaries required by the Patrolmen's Guide. Yes, there was the one slip up a while back, but Jamie had gone out of his way to avoid being alone with Edie when there was alcohol involved.

Scoffing, Reynolds dismissed Jamie's protests. He had heard them all before. The whole precinct had but nobody believed them. "Whatever you say. So you wanna go to the Yankee game, or what?"

"How much?" Jamie wanted to know. It had been a long time since he'd been to a baseball game. It might be good to hang with the guys.

"Left field bleachers. \$85.00," the other cop advised.

Jamie was reluctant. He still had some massive student loans to pay

off. A Harvard law degree isn't cheap and those loans are staggering when you don't have the lawyer's salary to pay them off. "That's pretty steep."

The other man rolled his eyes. "It's the Yankees, Reagan. Opening Day."

Finishing his beer, Jamie raised the empty pint glass for Reynolds' inspection. "Lemme get a refill and I'll get back to you," he promised stepping toward a small, unoccupied section of the crowded bar.

Before he could get the bartender's attention, Jamie felt another body squeeze into the tiny space with him.

"Hey, you!" Edie opened with a bright grin.

Gazing down at the petite blonde, Jamie smiled softly. He loved looking at her when she was relaxed and happy like she was in this moment. Her hair was loose, cascading down her shoulders. His fingers were itching to reach up and touch the golden tresses. Edie's tight top had a deep V-neck giving anybody who cared to look an eyeful of her generous cleavage. Although he was sure Eddie noticed him taking a quick peek, he made sure to keep his eyes above her neck.

She noticed alright. Playfully smacking his chest Edie accused, "You were trying to look down my shirt!"

"No, I wasn't," Jamie lied, slightly embarrassed at having gotten caught.

"I didn't say I was complaining," Edie joked.

Jamie's eyes grew wider in disbelief. Was Edie flirting with him, more than usual? They always bantered, but today her body language seemed to indicate that she was more than a little serious.

Her hand remained on the center of his sculpted chest. His pecks were accentuated by the tight NYPD t-shirted he sported under his open leather jacket. Even through the cotton of the shirt, the warmth from Edie's hand and her general proximity was raising Jamie's overall temperature.

"Just to show you what a good sport I am, I'll even buy you a beer," Edie offered.

"With somebody else's money," Jamie joked.

"It's the best kind, Reagan," Edie boasted, waving the \$20 she just won under his nose. Catching the bartender's attention, Edie ordered, "Two drafts." She indicated one was for her and the other for Jamie. Turning her attention back to him she queried, "What were you and Reynolds talking about?"

"He asked if I wanted to go to a Yankee game with him," Jamie answered.

Edie knew that wasn't the whole story. "So why did you look like you were trying not to punch him?"

"I wasn't gonna hit him," Jamie demurred.

Edie's withering look silently replied "sure you weren't; don't lie to me" without her having said a word. Jamie immediately caved. "He was making inappropriate comments about our relationship."

Taking a sip of her beer and smiling over the rim of the glass, Edie teased, "We have a relationship?" She wasn't any more fond of the people who suggested that she and her partner were carrying on an illicit affair but as an attractive woman in an Alpha male field, she had always been prepared for the nay-sayers who would spew hate and assume she slept her way to the top. What upset her was the idea that anybody could think that Jamison Reagan, of all people, would even think for a New York minute about doing anything other than toe the line. Danny Reagan wasn't wrong when he teased the pint sized officer about jumping the leash and going all Mamma Bear to protect her partner.

Frowning, Jamie elaborated, "You know I hate it when half the precinct thinks you and I are sleeping together."

"Would sleeping with me really be that bad?" Edie blurted before she could stop that thought from escaping.

Jamie couldn't believe Edie had just said that. If she only knew how many nights he had taken matters into his own hands thinking about that very thing or how many mornings he'd woken up to sticky sheets from a particularly vivid dream staring her. He couldn't imagine that sleeping with her would be bad. In fact, if that kiss a while back had been any indication, sleeping with her would be pretty damn amazing.

"It's against department regulations," Jamie sidestepped the question.

"You know, we're not officially partners anymore," Edie reminded him.

"You mean that wasn't you I have been stuck in an RMP with for eight hours a day for the last three weeks?" Jamie retorted.

"Glad you noticed," Edie kidded back.

"How could I not? Meal break wasn't the driving force behind every decision," mocked Jamie.

Although she knew he was being flippant, Edie still whined. "I don't understand why you are so obsessed with my eating habits."

Because Edie's earlier comment had basically gave him permission to look down her shirt, Jamie made a point of visually checking her out from head to toe, or at least as much as he could in the cramped bar. "Still just trying to figure out where you put it."

Straightening up to her full height of 5'2" Edie proclaimed, "I'm proud of my girlish figure."

"Hey, I never complained about the view," Jamie rejoined cheekily. Two could play at this game. She'd upped the ante. He wanted to see how far she was willing to take this.

"I work out!" Edie continued to protest. "I work damned hard for this body so I can eat and drink what I like."

"Never said you couldn't," Jamie tried to back-pedal his way out of this conversation.

Edie bragged, "You should work out with me. There are a lot of very . . . close . . . ah exercises that two people can do together. I'll make you sweat!" She punctuated that offer with a wink.

Jamie practically choked on his beer. He had no doubt that she'd make him sweat. He was perspiring in this bar. "Is it hot in here?"

Looking down, Edie realized Jamie's glass was almost empty. This was just starting to get interesting and she didn't want him to bolt before she figured out whether this was all talk or if they were really getting somewhere. "You need another beer." She tried to flag down the bartender to get his attention. After the bartender passed them again without acknowledgement, Edie turned in the cramped space so that her back was to Jamie and she was facing the bartender, trying in vain to get his attention. The bar was understaffed for the number of patrons in the place.

Pressure on his back from another patron caused Jamie to shuffle a few centimeters closer to Edie. He was practically plastered against her back. When the patron behind him shuffled again, Jamie's nose got a good whiff of Edie's shampoo and perfume. On top of the not so subtle hints Edie had been throwing out there, Jamie found the combination intoxicating. He placed his empty glass on the bar to prevent Edie's hair from getting into it.

The beers he'd already consumed had lowered some of Jamie's inhibitions. He placed his hand closest to the bar on Edie's hip and pulled her closer to him. With his outside hand, Jamie played with the ends of her golden tresses. "Don't cut your hair," he entreated, pressing his lips near her ear so she could hear his whisper over the din of the bar. His warm breath on her neck, caused the shorter woman to shiver.

Forgetting the bartender in response to Jamie's unexpected plea, Edie squirmed around to face him, connecting even more of their bodies. He didn't move his hand from her hip. "What?" she squawked, more to confirm that she heard him correctly.

Jamie also hadn't disentangled his hand from her hair as she curved into him. Instead he combed his fingers through the silky strands. "The other day you said you were thinking about cutting your hair. Don't. It's part of who you are."

With a twinkle in her eye and hope in her heart, Edie goaded her former partner, "And just who am I?"

Jamie took a minute to answer, in part because he had to slow down his breathing and find his voice. "You're like . . . I don't know. But when it's up at work all piled on your head, you're . . . you're this cop. This short . . . no nonsense, tough-as-nails, take-no-prisoners cop. But when it's down," he combed his fingers through it again, starting from her temple, "it's . . . you're . . .

You're this beautiful, desirable woman. It's like you're two different people."

Brightening at the compliment, Edie teased. "It's about time you noticed I'm a beautiful woman, Reagan."

"Believe me," Jamie assured her, "That fact has _never _escaped me."

"Ha," Edie challenged. "You said it yourself. The first time you saw me you thought I was an eleven year old playing dress up."

"Okay. The first time I saw you with your hair down," Jamie amended his earlier statement.

"Nah," Edie scoffed. "That day you were too busy drooling over my car."

Beaming Jamie replied, "But it's an awesome car." He had noticed both Edie and the car that night but it was safer to focus on the car. "And it's almost as hot as the woman who owns it."

That answer encouraged Edie but she wasn't fully satisfied. "What's with the sudden interest in my hair?"

"You brought it up. You said you were thinking about cutting it off," Jamie reminded her.

"And all you said at the time was it was 'a good head of hair.' Not exactly high praise there, Lambchop."

"Whaddidya want me to say?"

"I don't know, but more than that," Edie answered staring directly into Jamie's eyes trying to will him to express what she was hoping he was feeling. Whatever this was, it had been brewing between them and swirling around them for a long time. They'd had so many false starts. The regulations had always been in the way. Edie hoped that now was their time.

The bartender's voice broke through their mutual reverie and stopped them from falling further down the slippery slope they were on. "Two more?"

Edie looked to Jamie for the answer.

"You wanna get outta here instead?" Jamie inquired.

"And go where?" Edie wanted to know.

"You're place," Jamie suggested.

"Little forward there, aren't you? Just inviting yourself over."

"Fine," Jamie conceded. "My place, then."

"Mine's closer," Edie reminded him.

Jamie smirked at Edie's antics and shook his head. "You're

impossible."

"But you still love me," Edie proclaimed, moving toward the door.

Rolling his eyes skyward, Jamie agreed. "God help me. Yeah, I do."

Edie had been teasing. She used language casually. She wasn't so sure about Jamie though. He chose words very carefully but she wasn't going to read more into it at this point. Pushing past him and into the crowd, Edie called over her shoulder to make sure Jamie was following her, "You better."

Exiting the bar, the two fell into step as they walked down the block toward Edie's apartment. Since they were side-by-side, when Edie shivered slightly in the cool night air, Jamie draped an arm across her shoulders. She didn't protest. It was the most natural thing in the world and they immediately fell into step as though they had always walked joined at the hip.

They hadn't gone more than a block when Edie announced, "I'm hungry."

"Of course you are. When aren't you hungry?"

Hip checking him, Edie reminded him, "A girl's gotta eat. I need to keep my strength up. You never know what might come up." The double entendre hung heavily in the air.

Although he had been secretly hoping things would get physical with his beautiful partner ever since that night they kissed, Jamie was astonished at the things that had come out of her mouth tonight. Jamie was by no means a stupid man but getting involved with Edie was a big risk. This wouldn't be some one-off thing for him. If it didn't work out, he jeopardized one of the best friendships he ever had. After Sydney, he didn't know if he could survive another woman dumping him over his job. Deep down, he also knew he wanted to take that risk. Pulling Eddie slightly deeper to his side but continuing to walk, Jamie agreed, "You never know. I suppose it's a night when all sorts of things could come up, . . . or go down." Something about her brought out Jamie's competitive streak. If she was all in, so was he.

"The Skyline Diner's open," Edie suggested, trying to diminish the mounting sexual tension. She hadn't really expected Jamie to pick up her flirting thread no matter how blatant. Usually he deflected her flirting. The fact that he seemed to be open to escalating things was a pleasant but daunting surprise. With any other man, she'd know she was reading the signals correctly, but after they'd kissed a while back Edie wasn't certain what her partner was thinking or feeling. That next morning when he declared that it had been just something to get out of their systems, she'd been disappointed. She had been prepared to ask for a new partner because she knew straight-laced Jamie would never risk breaking a department rule or dishonoring the Commissioner by improperly fraternizing with his partner in violation of department regulations. Edie resigned herself to the idea that she wasn't what Jamie wanted. After all what little she knew about his type was he liked 'em brainy. Sydney was a Harvard lawyer just like him and then there was that brief fling with the lady doctor. A city

college graduate and the daughter of a convicted felon, she couldn't compete with that.

In the months that followed That Night as Edie thought of their kiss, Jamie continued to prove himself to be an exceptional partner who had her back even when they disagreed. He was a good friend as well. She didn't know where she would have been after that training detective put the moves on her. If it hadn't been for Jamie calling out the sleaze-bag in a classy way which left no room for doubt that the man's career would be over if he didn't step off, she would have been just another notch on that guy's belt and would have always wondered if she advanced in her career due to her skills in the field or in his bed.

Until tonight, it had seemed to her that Jamie had been avoiding being alone with her, especially if alcohol was involved. This seeming change of script had her feeling off balance. When it came to men, Edie knew she hadn't always made the best choices. Jamie Reagan was unlike any man she ever knew and she didn't want to screw this up. She'd take her cues from him but she was really hoping he was ready to make them partners of a different kind.

Jamie rejected the diner as an option. "Too bright and noisy. Let's just grab something at the bodega on the corner and head upstairs."

"You're buying," Edie insisted. When Jamie looked to her for an explanation she reminded him, "This was your idea."

"Fair enough," Jamie acquiesced.

They walked along in silence, both just enjoying the other's closeness. About a block away from her apartment, Edie extricated herself from under Jamie's arm. "I'm just going to duck in here for a second," she advised pointing to an all-night drug store. "Get me a chicken parm and a slice of chocolate cake."

"Yes m'am," Jamie mock saluted as he watched Edie scamper into the store.

Jamie had just gotten to the register to pay for their late night / early morning dinner, when Edie plopped a six pack on the counter as part of their order. When Jamie merely raised an eye brow in question, she brushed off his concern. "I realized I am almost out of beer and I didn't know how long you were staying."

Jamie was hoping they could talk. Everybody already thought they were together. Edie was an extremely beautiful woman, bright, funny, competent, just a bit too bossy and opinionated but as Erin had pointed out exactly his type. He vaguely wondered what that said about him as a man. He also knew that things between them sizzled and tonight she seemed to be turning up the heat. "Depends on how long you want me to," Jamie replied non-committally.

Edie managed to keep the word 'forever' from slipping out of her mouth. Instead she left it up to him. "However long you want. Mi casa es tu casa, partner. I mean I am letting you come back to my place." The emphasis on the word come was deliberate.

Once they reached her apartment, Edie shrugged out of her light

jacket and grabbed the six pack from the bag while Jamie unpacked the food onto the counter. When he was done with the food, Jamie draped his leather jacket over a nearby chair indicating that he was planning to stay a while.

After stowing the cardboard carrier in the fridge, Edie opened two beers and handed one to Jamie before grabbing her sandwich and heading over to the couch. Jamie added some dressing to his salad, then joined her. They ate in companionable silence. In typical fashion, Edie devoured her chicken parm before Jamie finished his salad.

"I don't know how you can eat so much rabbit food, Reagan," Edie carped about his healthy eating habits.

"Are you comparing me to a bunny?" Jamie griped before taking another bite.

Although she had been talking about his salad, at the mention of the word bunny, the phrase "fuck like bunnies" popped into her head. Edie knew Jamie's use of the synonym had been deliberate, to evoke her exact train of thought so she took the bait. "Bunnies are rumored to do certain things very well."

If Jamie was surprised by her come back he didn't react. Damn that man had a good poker face. Edie decided to up the ante in another way. Her face broke into a mask of bliss as she began eating her dessert, moaning in delight with every bite.

"Mmmm, I love this cake," Eddie proclaimed.

The carnal sounds she was making were having a physical effect on Jamie. He hoped he could make her moan like that. He knew it would be fun trying. "I don't think I have ever seen or heard somebody get so much pleasure out of food," Jamie chided Edie for her decadence.

"You ought to try it sometime, Reagan," Edie suggested. "Pleasure is a good thing."

"Well then let me have some," Jamie challenged, putting his empty salad container on the coffee table and leering at Edie.

She cut off a piece of cake with the side of her fork then held it toward Jamie. He leaned to enable her to feed him but she slowly pulled her fork back toward her, causing Jamie to follow. When he was all the way committed, supporting himself with his arm stretched across the back of her couch, she popped the scrumptious treat into her own mouth and grinned triumphantly.

A bit of chocolate frosting was perched tantalizingly on her upper lip. Jamie's eyes were riveted on her mouth. Instead of backing away onto his own side of the couch, he shifted closer with a predatory gleam in his eye. Reaching up, Jamie brushed his finger across Edie's upper lip. "You have . . . ah . . . a bit of . . . um . . frosting . . ." he advised as he drew his finger with the icing into his own mouth. Edie was mesmerized by his actions and stared as Jamie wantonly suckled his finger.

Savoring the sweetness he agreed with her earlier accolades. "You're

right; it is delicious."

Unconsciously, Edie licked her upper lip, hoping to taste a bit of Jamie from where he had touched her. Her heart was beating wildly. With trembling hands she managed to set her uneaten cake down, which caused her to shift even closer to Jamie.

"What are we doing?" she whispered, wiping her sweaty palms on her jean clad thighs hoping to steady them.

Jamie stopped and looked at her. It was now or never. Earnestly he responded, "Irrevocably changing the nature of our partnership. If you want to." As much as he wanted this, he wasn't going to force her. They had never talk about it. While you could usually cut the unresolved sexual tension and intense longing between them with a knife, Jamie need Edie to know this was her decision.

"Finally!" enthused Edie surging forward to capture Jamie's lips with hers. Wrapping her hands around his neck, she drew him into her. His arm came from the back of the couch to envelope her in his tight embrace. When their lips met, this wasn't the soft tentative kiss they had shared outside that night Jamie had walked her home. This was hot and wet, needy and demanding.

Before they got completely carried away, Edie broke the kiss. Jamie took a minute to catch his breath too but wasn't sure what was happening when Edie stood up. His puzzlement, must have been apparent from his face, because she held out her hand. "C'mon."

Jamie hesitated. He wanted to follow her. Oh did he want to follow her, but he never thought tonight would end like this and he wasn't prepared. "We should . . .ah talk . . .or something."

A dark shadow fell across Edie's face. "You're not gonna tell me this is more of getting things out of our system," she demanded.

"I couldn't get you out of my system if I tried. I'm addicted," Jamie reassured her.

"So what's the problem?"

Turning his head, Jamie admitted, "As much as I want this. . . ." He turned back to look Edie square in the eyes and continued, "Want you. . ." He turned away again. "I ah, . . . I'm . . well I never. . . I'm not exactly prepared. I wasn't expecting things to escalate quite . . . so quickly. I mean I haven't even taken you on a proper date."

"You did buy me dinner," Edie reminded him that he had paid for their meal. It was part of the reason she had insisted he pay. She didn't want some misguided sense of chivalry to ruin this or even delay it. Purposefully staring at Jamie's crotch which was bulging his pants invitingly and what Edie assumed must be somewhat painfully, she played along, "Besides, you seemed fully prepared to me."

Jamie practically blushed. "That's not what I meant." He stood to confront her. "Ugh. . . lemme just run back outside."

Chuckling Edie admonished, "Relax, Lambchop." Fishing around in her back pocket Edie brought out a small box of three condoms. "I gotcha

covered."

For the third time that night Jamie tilted his head in confusion.

Edie chuckled at his plight. "What'd you think I went to the drug store for?"

"Girl stuff," Jamie shrugged.

Edie rolled her eyes and shook her head, "What kind of partner do you think I am? We back each other up, Reagan."

For his part, Jamie just grinned stupidly at her. "Gotta love a woman who's prepared."

"Damn straight." Stepped into Jamie's personal space Edie demanded, "Are we done with the talking now?"

In response Jamie scooped her up in a fireman's carry and marched into her bedroom.

The next morning, the light spilling into Edie's bedroom woke Jamie. They had been so into each other, neither had taken the time to pull the shade. Her apartment was on a high enough floor that they hadn't given anybody a show but it took Jamie a minute to adjust to the newness of his surroundings. The sheet was pooled around his waist but he wasn't cold. Eddie had her head pillowed on his chest; her long blonde hair was fanned out practically covering his torso. He began combing his fingers through it. This was really why he didn't want her to cut it. The night before as they had been making love, his heart caught in his throat when he looked down at her with her hair framing her face against the stark white of the pillow case. She was a vision. It was all he could do not to tell her he loved her. Although he was certain he did, he knew it was too soon and that in bed, she'd have reservations about believing him. He could play it cool a while longer.

Jamie's preening caused Edie to stir from her slumber.

"'Lemme sleep,'" she mumbled into his chest. Having worked many an early tour with her, Jamie was well aware that Edie was not what anybody would call a morning person.

Pressing a soft kiss to her temple Jamie returned the greeting. "Morning, beautiful."

Edie picked her head up slightly and glared at him. "Do not even. Happy and perky in the patrol car at the start of shift was bad enough. Don't you dare be perky in my bed, Reagan."

Chuckling, Jamie confessed, "Can't help it. I'm happy."

"I'd be happier with more sleep," Edie grumbled.

"No. I don't think so," Jamie disagreed with her plan and began sensuously caressing her back. "I have a much better idea."

Finally catching on, Edie got with the program by tilting her head up for a kiss, Edie even conceded, "If this is your idea of morning

exercise Jamie, I could come to like mornings."

"Mornings, afternoons, evenings, overnights. . ." Jamie promised before putting his mouth to better use as the new lovers began the first day of the rest of their lives proving just how connected they were.

End
file.